

San Jacinto River Waste Pits, Texas

Site Update – June 2011

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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BACKGROUND:

The site consists of impoundments located adjacent to the Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) Bridge and the San Jacinto River and the surrounding areas, containing paper mill waste from the Pasadena Champion Paper Mill. Two impoundments are located north of the I-10 Bridge and are partially submerged in the San Jacinto River on the western side in Harris County, Texas. An additional impoundment is suspected to be located directly south of the I-10 Bridge and is currently being investigated under the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study.

The primary hazardous substances documented at the site are dioxins (polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans). Dioxin concentrations as high as 360,000 parts per trillion have been found in sediment samples collected from the submerged portion of the waste disposal ponds, as well as dioxin concentrations as high as 3,660 parts per trillion in sediment samples collected outside the original 1966 waste ponds. A fish consumption advisory based on dioxin is in place on this segment of the watershed.

The site was listed on the EPA National Priorities List on March 19, 2008. More information about the site is available at <http://www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6sf/pdf/files/0606611.pdf>.

STATUS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

I. Community Outreach

On July 20, EPA will participate in the monthly Community Advisory Committee meeting, along with a wide range of community stakeholders, to share details of the ongoing cleanup. A draft Community Involvement Plan will be provided to the public in July. EPA, in conjunction with site stakeholders, is initiating plans for the next community-wide meeting, to be held in late summer 2011.

II. Source Stabilization

Respondents continue land placement of armor cap rock on top of Western waste pit cell. As of July 8, total rock placed (armor cap type A, B/C, C, and D) was 57,672 tons, which is 93% of the entire project. More information about the TCRA is available at www.epaossc.org/SanJacWPremoval. Armor cap placement is anticipated to be complete in July, pending final inspections and survey results.

III. Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)

The Respondents are currently implementing the field sampling plans for the Fate & Transport Model Study, including the collection of upstream sediment load and current velocity data. Data for the low river flow condition has been collected. However, data collection for the high river flow conditions is waiting on a high river flow event. A draft residential soil sampling plan was submitted by Respondents and was reviewed and discussed by the regulatory stakeholders; comments on this residential sampling plan are being prepared now for transmission to the Respondents. The residential sampling includes collection of soil samples from both the east and west sides of the San Jacinto River near the Site for dioxin analysis. Finally, the validated soil sampling data for the southern impoundments were reviewed and discussed by the regulatory stakeholders and a letter to the Respondents regarding additional sampling in the southern impoundment is now being prepared. The EPA SJRWP website with public information on the RI/FS, TCRA, and Houston/Galveston Bay Watershed and can be found online at: http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto.

IV. Watershed Management

EPA continues to coordinate with the Port of Houston Authority, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District and the TCEQ. The port and EPA will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement to facilitate the exchange of data to further investigate the SJRWP site and Patrick Bayou and will inform communities in the area. TCEQ envisions completing the total maximum daily load for Buffalo Bayou with regard to dioxin/furan by the end of 2012 and will put together a monitoring and implementation plan to reduce levels in Buffalo Bayou to within national background levels.

V. Enforcement

The potentially responsible party (PRP) group continues to conduct the RI/FS under the Unilateral Administrative Order. The PRP group also continues to conduct the TCRA under an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC). Currently, the PRP group is in violation with the AOC for not performing work in accordance with the December 15, 2010, EPA approved amended Work Schedule. The PRP group is in the process of coming into compliance with the AOC.